

Counter-recruiters in High School

Subject Area Manpower

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The No Child Left Behind Act¹ requires all federally - funded high schools to provide military recruiters with high - school directory information. This requirement is essential to preserving an all-volunteer military force. Even so, among their target market (of high school senior males), enlisted recruiters compete with colleges for applicants. In addition, few key influencers (parents, teachers, and coaches) recommend military service. But the counter-recruiter movement, a grassroots organization, which has gained national attention since January 2005, is by far the military recruiter's greatest obstacle, challenging the military's ability to meet its annual recruiting goals by staging anti-recruitment demonstrations on high school and college campuses across America.

Counter recruiters attempt to deny military recruiters access to student-directory information and high school campuses and the most extreme members of the counter-recruitment movement seek to end military recruiting in high schools altogether.

Equipped with the knowledge that some recruiters lie to applicants, politicians lie to the public, and young people are killed in war, counter recruiters are blinded by the inaccurate information that shapes their personal and political opinions.

¹ Act that gives military recruiters the same access to student directory information afforded to colleges, ring companies, and potential employers.

What Counter Recruiters Believe

"The War in Iraq is Immoral"



"...The immoral war in Iraq has resulted in the military's need for more soldiers. The provisions of the NCLB Act allow for more aggressive recruiting in our schools and are enabling military recruiters to meet their monthly and yearly missions. Many of the young people recruited this year could wind up in war zones months after graduating from high school.... "²

This conclusion would seem a fair assessment if one were to look at the war from only one incident, such as the isolated incident at Abu Ghraib prison. Though extremely troublesome and definitely strategically damaging to the U.S., constant reminders of this type of isolated incident ignores the fact that it was the U.S. military that exposed, investigated, and punished offenders.

"Recruiters Target Low Income and Minority Students"

"Everyday the military recruits scores of young Americans to serve in the armed forces... What they are not told is that military recruiters target low-income youth - predominately youth of color - because they realize that

² Internet Article, United for Peace and Justice.org

these students have fewer opportunities than students who attend well-funded schools."³

Young adults who have little or no direction after graduating from high school find significant incentives offered by the military, including enlistment bonuses, training in skills that have potential for civilian jobs, money for college when their service is completed, travel, and decent pay. The military can raise young people out of poverty and open up new horizons and can be a refuge from bleak inner cities, and poor rural communities. Many young men and women heading for trouble have been able to change their circumstances after joining the military and learn real discipline.

"The demographic data on race reveal that military enlistees are not, in fact, more heavily recruited from black neighborhoods. ... In other words, there is no "disproportionate share of minorities" serving in the military... Even if the military had a higher share of African-Americans, it does not follow that those recruits are poorer, from poorer areas, from more urbanized areas, less educated, or from less educated areas."⁴

"Recruiters Target High School Drop Outs and Students with Low Grade Point Averages"

The all-volunteer U.S. military is the best and brightest in the world and, with changes that include peacekeeping missions and humanitarian assistance, recruiting a quality force

³ Internet Article, Campus Action Web Center

⁴ Who Bears the Burden? Demographic Characteristics of U.S. Military Recruits Before and After 9/11 by Tim Kane, Ph.D., Center for Data Analysis Report #05-08, November 7, 2005

is as important as ever. These reasons alone make it necessary for the overwhelming majority of the force to have at a minimum, a high school diploma as a prerequisite for enlistment qualification.

"... If one single statistic could settle this issue, it is this: 98 percent of all enlisted recruits who enter the military have an education level of high school graduate or higher, compared to the national average of 75 percent. In an education context, rather than attracting underprivileged young Americans, the military seems to be attracting above-average Americans."⁵

"Recruiters Lie to Prospective Applicants About What to Expect From the Military"

People sign up for the military voluntarily and know that war and combat are dangerous. With no evidence and blatant disregard for the integrity of the institution, counter recruiters would have would be applicants believe that all recruiters will say anything to enlist them in the service. Military recruiters do not want ignorant and unwilling recruits also, recruiters provide what the U.S. armed forces has promised to the applicant in writing.

"Serving in the Armed Forces Does Not Serve a Higher Purpose"

Counter recruiters simply cannot fathom that a person might be willing to fight and, if necessary, die for his or her country. Instead, they believe that only through peaceful

⁵Who Bears the Burden? Demographic Characteristics of U.S. Military Recruits Before and After 9/11 by Tim Kane, Ph.D., Center for Data Analysis Report #05-08, November 7, 2005

measures can one achieve a sense of higher purpose. In fact, the U.S. military can be found in every corner of the world participating in peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance missions.

Counter recruiters who protest military recruiters disrupt job fairs, force military recruiters to leave campuses, and on many occasions significantly delay or shut down entire job fairs. As a result, students looking for career advice and opportunities, whether military or otherwise, are largely prevented from doing so.

Why Should the Counter Recruitment Movement Concern the Military?

POST 9/11/01

"In the wake of these terrible assaults, our initial horror has given way to a mixture of intense sadness, quiet anger, and resolute determination; We will deal decisively with the terrorist network that is responsible for this horror.... ... These attacks were an assault on our people and our way of life; but they were also a wake-up call-one that we ignore to our peril...."⁶

After 9/11/01 and throughout 2002, enlisted recruiting surged, from a total Department of Defense (DoD) enlisted strength of 1,155,344⁷ in September 2001, to 1,177,806⁸ in

⁶Prepared Statement for the House and Armed Services Committees: "Building a Military for the 21st Century" By Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, October 3 and 4, 2001

⁷ Military Personnel Statistics, DoD Website

⁸ *ibid*

September of 2002. Twenty-two percent⁹ of key influencers and military service applicants were eager to bring Osama Bin Ladin and his terrorist organization to justice. The country was united and full of patriotism. But this patriotism was short-lived; Americans soon grew impatient that the leader of Al-Qaeda was not captured after a full year. Moreover, announced body counts on the evening news helped to strain the relationship between the military and American citizens.

The Current Recruiting Climate

The current recruiting climate is reminiscent of the strong anti-war sentiment during the Vietnam era. In a recent speech at Fort Bragg, President Bush declared, "There is no higher calling than service in our armed forces." It seems fewer and fewer young Americans and their parents agree with him.

"... Today's immediate military recruiting and retention challenge centers on the continuing deployment of over 180,000 ground forces from the active, reserve, and National Guard components to the war zone in Iraq. Military officials have testified that fiscal year 2005 proved to be a difficult recruiting year and believe the recruiting environment will become even more challenging in fiscal year 2006."¹⁰

The Department of Defense relies on its four active components (the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force),

⁹ U.S. Department of Defense Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) News Transcript, Presenter: Major General Michael D. Rochelle, U.S. Army Recruiting Commander Friday, May 20, 2005 1:32 p.m. EDT

¹⁰Page 1GAO-06-134 Military Personnel United States Government Accountability Office Washington, D.C. 20548, November 17, 2005

four reserve components (the Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve), and two National Guard components (Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve) to meet its mission of retaining 2.7 million personnel.

"... The active components prefer to enter each fiscal year with 35 to 65 percent of the coming year's recruiting goals already filled by recruits in the delayed entry program. Current data show, however, that the components are not meeting these targets... ." ¹¹

The future of the all-volunteer armed forces are seventeen-year-old male high school seniors who, as studies have shown, are just as inclined to enlist in the military as attend college. ¹² But it is crucial that a recruiter contacts them during their junior year of high school, which is why the provision of student directory information is so critical.

Naivety and inexperience fuel the counter recruitment movement's belief that the armed forces are irrelevant, and that the United States can continue to exist as a democracy without the courageous men and women who serve in the armed forces. This shortsightedness infringes on the rights of those who desire information about the military, many of whom do not intend to go to college, cannot afford to pay for college, or see military service as a way of giving back to their country.

¹¹ Page 1GAO-06-134 Military Personnel United States Government Accountability Office Washington, D.C. 20548, November 17, 2005

¹² Rutherford, G., *Recruiting from the College-Oriented Market* – information paper (Washington, DC: Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, July 6, 2001)

Studies show that by the end of their senior years of high school, students have made up their minds about whether to enter military service. Enlisting in the armed forces is a choice; recruiters offer the vehicle with which to make that choice.

Exercising First Amendment rights and fighting for beliefs in is one thing, making it impossible for the military to recruit is another. Whatever one's view is of Iraq and the current administration's policies, all Americans are under the protection of the U.S. military and it is for this reason alone that a strong all volunteer military is relevant. A peaceful world is one that all should strive for, but diminishing the strength of the armed forces leaves America exposed and jeopardizes the security of the nation.

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